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#### INFORMATION NOTE

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations

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Subject: Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses  
and International Lakes: Seventh Meeting of the Parties (MOP 7)  
(Budapest, 17 - 19 November 2015)  
- Compilation of statements by the EU and its Member States

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Delegations will find in the Annex a compilation of agreed statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and its Member States at the above-mentioned meeting.

**Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses  
and International Lakes:  
Seventh Meeting of the Parties (MOP 7)  
(Budapest, 17 - 19 November 2015)**

**- Compilation of statements by the EU and its Member States -**

**High Level Segment**

**(a) Part 1 — The global Water Convention**

Chairperson of the Convention, honourable Ministers, Excellences, high Representatives of the UNECE, ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The EU and its MSs welcome the global opening of the UNECE Water Convention and the entering into force of the UN Watercourses Convention. Herewith significant progress has been made towards overarching global water governance.

With regard to strengthening transboundary water cooperation, the major EU achievements concerning inland waters have been the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the Flood Risk Management Directive as both focus on transboundary cooperation in rivers and river basins, being aware that those ecosystems do not have frontiers and have to be protected and managed jointly among neighboring countries.

Both directives have helped setting up new cooperation structures, on national and international level, improved mutual understanding and favored trust building. Existing international river basin commissions have hence been strengthened as successful cooperation and coordination platforms. The experiences gathered in these processes are and will be shared in the framework of the UNECE Water Convention.

EU policy promoting water cooperation across the world builds on a long tradition of cooperation and therefore vast experience and knowledge of the management of transboundary waters. The EU will continue sharing this know-how.

For the future, the EU, together with its Member States, also strongly commit to implement their respective obligations related to transboundary cooperation and will continue supporting the implementation of global Water Conventions.

During the next decades, conflicts over access to water are likely to become more frequent and could endanger stability and security in many parts of the world. Furthermore, if it comes to adaptation strategies to climate change, water issues will play a central role. The Convention is already anticipating these likely developments and they should continue to be taken into account when preparing its future work programs.

The Convention should also promote prosperity and human rights to water and sanitation, entitling everyone without discrimination to sufficient, safe, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use as well as to physical and affordable access to sanitation. In this regard the Protocol on Water and Health to the UNECE Water Convention is of great importance since it aims to attain an adequate supply of safe drinking water and sanitation for everyone as well as to reduce water borne diseases.

With reference to challenges related to the global opening of the Convention, we need to consider that the UNECE Water Convention is not the only global convention in the water sector. The UN Watercourses Convention has entered into force in August 2014 and there are other regional instruments, such as the SADC (Southern African Development Community) Water Protocol as well as many river or river basin agreements. The UNECE Water Convention and the UN Watercourses Convention are however compatible and complementary and a lot of regional instruments are based on similar principles and approaches as both Conventions. For the instruments to co-exist and work together in an efficient way, strong cooperation is needed among all stakeholders, hence avoiding duplication of work with limited resources and ensuring consistency, including at legislative level.

Thank you, Chair.

**(b) Part 2 — The Water Convention in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global commitments**

Chairperson of the Convention, honourable Ministers, Excellences, high Representatives of the UNECE, ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Regarding the new global commitments, EU water policies, initiatives and programs, alongside Member States actions, will be of utmost importance to effectively reach the newly established objectives. This is especially true for the Sustainable Development Goal on water, comprising one specific target calling for transboundary cooperation to implement integrated water resources management, as well as for all other water related goals and targets.

Upcoming needs, such as adaptation to climate change and the requirements set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as other global commitments, will be taken into account by the EU when further developing its water policies, initiatives and programs. We encourage international river basins, its Parties and all other stakeholders to proceed in the same direction.

On EU and global level, the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development needs to be given high priority. Effective participation and engagement of all stakeholders, including the civil society and the private sector, will be the key to a successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Already in its former work programs, the UNECE Water Convention has taken care of monitoring, flood protection, climate change and adaptation as well as nexus aspects. There are many useful products on the table, available for everybody and ongoing processes, for instance the climate change exchange platform on pilot projects and the nexus assessments. The outcome of such work will be of utmost importance for a successful implementation of the new global commitments.

Concerning monitoring and review of the implementation of the new commitments, the UNECE Water Convention has the potential to play a special role, together with its Protocol on Water and Health, in the regional review process on one hand (which is envisaged at UN regions levels and will require EU – ECE cooperation in the future) and in supporting the national level implementation on the other. The reporting mechanism to be implemented, together with the one already existing under the Protocol on Water and Health, could facilitate this process.

We strongly encourage the UNECE Water Convention to reflect the new global commitments in its future work programs and to continue providing its very effective institutional structure, expertise and valuable tools to successfully implement the new global commitments. The EU and its Member States are ready to work with the Convention's bodies to this effect.

Thank you, Chair.

### **General Segment**

#### **Item 4a) Assessing benefits of transboundary cooperation**

We appreciate this new area of work realized under the UNECE Water Convention and welcome the elaboration of the policy guidance note on identifying, assessing and communication the benefits of transboundary water cooperation. This policy guidance note can be a useful tool for facilitating accession to the Convention as well as promoting transboundary cooperation in a wider sense.

#### **Item 4c) Implementation Committee**

We thank the Implementation Committee for the work undertaken since its creation. We strongly encourage current and future Parties to the Convention to make use of the Implementation Committee's expertise where there is need for it, e.g. by using the advisory procedure which is aimed at facilitating implementation and application of the Convention.

Besides, we support the three candidates who run for re-election to the Implementation Committee as they present good expertise in the fields related to the Convention and they have done an excellent job during their first mandate.

#### **Item 4f) Consideration of the need for reporting under the Convention**

We welcome the establishment of a regular reporting mechanism under the UNECE Water Convention given that this will make available relevant information on the implementation of the Convention and potential difficulties encountered during the process. The reporting mechanism is meant to be a useful tool for the donor states to get feedback on whether the money spent helps to achieve the objectives of the Convention as well as for all States implementing the Convention to see whether the implementation is on the right track.

While designing the reporting templates, the Task Force for reporting has taken into account the necessity not to bring extra burden to Parties, given other reporting obligations Parties might have.

We therefore support the idea to start with a pilot reporting exercise in 2016-2017 in order to test the reporting templates and to revise them – if needed – before the 8<sup>th</sup> MOP.

#### **Item 4g) European Union Water Initiative and National Policy Dialogues**

We are pleased to announce that EU cooperation in the water sector is now moving towards a more effective strategic approach, from many projects to few focused areas.

The EU Water Initiative (EUWI) is one of the key instruments for establishing sustainable management of water resources. The National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) under the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) component of the EU Water Initiative in cooperation with the UNECE Water Convention have been successful and this cooperation will continue. More precisely, the support to NPDs in the framework of the EUWI, focusing on Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, in cooperation with UNECE and OECD, has generated a process which is progressively applied to all countries of these regions, with an increasing ownership of the countries concerned. This work will be integrated in the future into the EU regional programmes addressing water and the environment.

Moreover, the NPDs constitute a framework facilitating discussions on transboundary issues, as well as in the interaction between water resources management and the energy and food sectors. In particular, in the Eastern neighbouring countries and in Central Asia, the EU Water Initiative has proven to be instrumental for launching inter-ministerial discussions on the implementation of water reforms and progress towards sound economic and financially solid water policies. Among others, such work contributed to develop a participatory process for planning and discussing water issues. It also helped to address key challenges on the management of river basins at transboundary level.

We are happy to announce that the Eastern Partnership countries will start soon a new project under the EUWI – called the EUWI + East. This program will cover both support for the development of policies and support for the implementation of river basin management plans. The EU is allocating further 23 million for the EU Water Initiative + East. Funds will be allocated through the European Neighbourhood Instrument. The EUWI+ East will cover only the countries of the Eastern Neighbourhood, namely: Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The EUWI+ East will work with the OECD and with UNECE on the support to the strengthening of the legal framework in line with the EU Water Framework Directive and the Multilateral Environmental Agreements. In addition to that, the EUWI+ East is planning to work with a Consortium of EU Member States on the support to the implementation of River Basins Management Plans.

We are also pleased to announce that at the EU-Central Asia High Level Conference on Environment and Water Cooperation in October 2015, the EU and the Central Asian countries have committed to continue to support the EU Water Initiative in Central Asia.

#### **Item 4i) Thematic assessment of the water-food-energy- ecosystems nexus**

We welcome the work of the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystem Nexus and the ongoing and planned pilot projects. We support creating synergies with similar on-going initiatives in other organisations and processes, thus avoiding duplication of efforts.

The EU will particularly strengthen regional dialogues addressing the water-energy-food security nexus in different partner regions, including the Eastern Neighbourhood and Central Asia, with a view to endorse Nexus policy recommendations and action plans. This effort will also focus on other regions and basins, which could be of interest in the context of the Water Conventions (e.g. Mekong Basin, Latin America, Africa, and Southern Neighbourhood - the Mediterranean)

#### **Item 4h) Water and industrial accidents**

There is relevant coordination ongoing between the UNECE Industrial Accident Convention and the UNECE Water Convention that benefits the implementation of the two Conventions. For example, this cooperation is happening in the context of the checklist for contingency planning for accidents affecting transboundary waters.

The checklist was successfully tested in the Danube Delta Project during which Romania, Ukraine and Moldova made tremendous progress in the co-operation on the hazard and crisis management between the Danube Delta countries. The project has supported the three countries in their efforts to prevent accidental water pollution and prepare for effective response.

This demonstrates the usefulness of the checklist also in the context of water protection. Parties could, therefore, consider using the checklist in other similar water protection projects and it could serve also for the follow up activities to the Danube Delta Project, which will cover crosscutting issues related to several agreements including the UNECE Water Convention, the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, or the Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the River Danube.

#### **Item 5) Opening of the Convention**

We warmly welcome that the UNECE Water Convention is a global instrument since 2013 and that this global opening will now become operational after the ratification of the amendments to Articles 25 and 26 of the Convention by all Parties.

We look forward to cooperate with the countries who intend to join the Convention and we also encourage them to share with us their experiences and lessons learnt regarding transboundary water cooperation.

As regards the next years, the UNECE Water Convention should continue its successful work as a strong legal instrument, with an adaptive working structure, a governing body and a dedicated secretariat as well as based on the real needs of its Parties. It will be vital to promote and improve the knowledge about the UNECE Water Convention's provisions, its work and products, which are useful also for countries beyond the UNECE region. The development of the Convention into a real global instrument should be promoted, side by side with the UN Watercourses Convention, joining forces and resources and avoiding duplication of work. The success of the UNECE Water Convention is evidenced by the interest of countries outside the pan-European region. The UNECE Water Convention has already served as an exchange platform, bringing since long more than only the Parties together. Countries from many parts of the world as well as other organizations, agencies and NGOs have been able to benefit from this platform. The latter should therefore be strengthened and other countries and stakeholders be invited to join and share their knowledge and experiences.

**Item 9) Programme of Work 2016-2018, terms of reference for the bodies established to implement it and resources needed for its implementation**

We welcome and give strong support to the draft Programme of Work for 2016-2018, as it is balanced and forward-looking, while realistic.

The EU and its Member States will continue to put at the Convention's disposal their achievements in the water field.

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